**Child Protection Policy**

We are three counselors from International schools in Bangkok. We are part of an informal counselors group who meet regularly for Professional Development and sharing resources. Child abuse regularly comes up at counsellors meetings as an area that counsellors need support and further training in. Dave is from America, Rob is from Australia and Amy is from UK. We know that you cannot transfer policies and guidelines from one country to another. We need to develop our own. In an effort to deal with this, the counseling group brought in an expert for up to date guidance – Lois Englebrecht. She has worked extensively with international schools in the Middle East and Asia.

From this information, we have drafted guidelines for the development of a child protection policy and potential procedures, which could be adapted for use in any International School.

We are recommending that every ISAT School should write and implement a Child Protection Policy and develop procedures to protect children from Physical abuse, Sexual abuse and neglect.

We are aware that there will be resistance to writing and implementing such a policy in International Schools.

* There are different understandings of abuse.
* Local laws don’t always apply to expatriates.
* Regulations governing reporting and management of child abuse situations in the home countries of expatriates presuppose the existence of a child welfare system legally entitled to remove a child at risk from a dangerous living situation and provide that child with whatever follow up care is necessary to secure the child’s health and safety.
* Personal reactions and emotions tell people to keep away from abuse cases.
* Lack of support from support agencies.
* Knowledge of abuse cases not going well – they are messy!
* Cultural differences – perspectives on defining abuse.

A Child Protection Policy is important for schools for prevention, intervention and healing. This includes educating parents, teachers, providing information and resources and developing a policy. It is also our obligation, as loco parentis to protect children as Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states.

A Child Protection Policy should include:

* Definitions
* Signs and symptoms
* Reporting procedures
* Staff training and supervision
* Curriculum
* Interviews
* Records
* Physical Environment
* Counselling and follow up
* Recruitment

Ref: Thai Child Protection Act 2003

Article 25:

5. Parents or guardians are forbidden to treat a child in ways or manners which constitute unlawful caring.

Article 26:

A person is forbidden to:

1. Commit or omit acts which result in torturing a child’s body or mind.

Ref: Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Article 19: Protection from Abuse and Neglect:

No one should hurt the child in any way. Even the parents have no right to hurt the child. Adults should make sure that the child is protected from abuse, violence and neglect

Article 34: Sexual Abuse:

Every child has the right to be protected from sexual abuse. This means that nobody can do anything to the child’s body that s/he does not want them to do, such as touching, taking pictures and making the child say things that s/he does not want to say.

**Definitions of abuse**:

* Infliction of physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing death, disfigurement, skin bruising, impairment of physical or emotional health or loss or impairment of any bodily function, and/or
* Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child’s bodily functioning, and/or
* Committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child as defined in the criminal code, or intentionally touching, either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes, and/or
* Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child’s pain and/or mental suffering, and/or
* Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as de-fined by the criminal code, and/or
* Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child.
* Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of all above.

The following outlines indicators of abuse and neglect and should be used by the educator as a guideline for reporting. You do not need to know the details of the possible abuse or be certain whether or not an indicator means abuse has taken place in order to report. The reporting law specifies reporting when you have “reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect.” Reasonable cause/suspicion exists when it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain a suspicion, based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing when appropriate on his or her training and experience, to suspect child abuse.

The severity of an indicator or statements by the child as to the non-accidental nature of the injury may indicate possible abuse.

**Signs and Symptoms:**

**Indicators of Physical Abuse:**

* Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body
* Bruises of different ages (various colors)
* Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle)
* Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation
* Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back or buttocks
* Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron or cigarette
* Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso
* Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child
* Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line
* Unexplained laceration, abrasions or fractures

**Indicators of Sexual Abuse**:

* Venereal disease in a child of any age
* Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital or anal areas
* Difficulty in walking or sitting
* Refusing to change into gym clothes
* Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint
* Pregnancy at 11 or 12 with no history of peer socialization
* Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to age level

***\*behavioral indicators in and of themselves do not constitute abuse. Together with other indicators they may warrant a referral.***

**Curriculum:**

## INTRODUCTION TO PERSONAL SAFETY

## Empowering schools and students in the prevention of child abuse can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The following lessons can be used within the values curriculum or other curricula and are only one methodology. They are based on experiences of professionals working with children. There are some people that claim that at least one-third of our children, boys and girls, are sexually abused before they reach the age of 18. In order to help protect children, the lessons focus on the information and skill deficits found in many children and their families that make them most vulnerable to be exploited:

* Adults are afraid to talk about sex with their children and thus children are left without even a vocabulary to talk about what may have happened;
* Children are told to obey parents and respect all adults unconditionally, thus not building any skills in assertiveness or decision making;
* Children are not allowed their own feelings, instead adults tell children, “Don’t cry,” “Don’t be afraid,” “It’s bad to be angry,” “Don’t laugh at that,” thus often removing the inner signals children need to protect themselves and understand what is happening;
* Forgiveness is forced upon victims of abuse, adding further responsibility for an assault they are not to blame for in any way;
* Family sanctity, respect and shame are all used incorrectly to keep silent about the sexual abuse of our children.

The nine major concepts we hope to teach through these lessons are:

1. Body Access and the right to be safe
2. A continuum of touch from safe to unsafe
3. Intuition and using feelings for safety
4. The right to say “NO”
5. Safety rules
6. Support systems
7. Private body parts
8. Sexual contact with an adult is never the child’s fault
9. Secrets about touching are not okay

The nine major concepts are taught within three major components of Personal Safety lessons for students:

1. **INFORMATION** Some information needed by children (depending on age):
   * Touching rules (boundaries)
   * Body parts vocabulary
   * Sexuality / Gender differences and issues
   * Support systems
   * Laws
   * Telling / Reporting for early intervention

# 2. **SKILLS** Some skills based on information needed:

* Assertiveness
* How to tell (using support systems)
* Decision making

3. **BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM** in order to practice skills based on

information needed:

* Understanding feelings/emotions
* Affirmation of worth and rights
* Building / Teaching empathy

FEARS OF DISCLOSURE

Fears of disclosure include:

**Of Remembering**. Sexually abused children often cope by pushing the experience as far back in their minds as they can, to “forget” and avoid feeling hurt again.

**Of Losing Love**. Abuse makes most victims feel “dirty.” Child victims also often feel responsible for what happened to them. Because of these, they worry that their parents and friends will stop loving them once they learn about the abuse. They fear the separation from loved ones that could result from their telling.

**Of Shame & Guilt**. Children either know or can sense that their sexual experiences with adults are wrong. This makes telling someone and acknowledging it occurred, shameful. Older children, have also been known to suffer more from a sense of guilt than younger children.

**Of Being Blamed**. Children fear that they will be blamed for the sexual touches and that they somehow wanted it. People tend to believe adults more than they would believe children. Offenders also often make the excuse that their victims “asked” to be touched sexually. Children ask for affection and attention, which is their right, and not for sex about which they do not as yet have appropriate context for consent.

**Of Further Harm**. Offenders often threaten their victims and their families as a means of maintaining control. Victims then carry the burden of keeping their families safe by not telling.

**Staff Training and Supervision:**

* Every year, staff should be trained in the school’s policy and procedures regarding child protection.
* Talk about child abuse.
* Have formal Child Protection training regularly with the whole school staff.

Make the medical clinic/school nurse part of the team.**Interviews:**

**How do I respond to a child’s disclosure of abuse?**

A student may tell you directly and specifically what is going on, or s/he may hint indirectly at a situation. Sometimes the child will use “strings attached,” such as asking the teacher to promise not to tell anyone (a promise the teacher cannot keep). Or, a student may claim the problem belongs to someone else, that s/he is only there about a friend. Use your judgment in deciding how much to discuss the situation with the child. Often a child is willing to reveal the details of an incident only once

**The educator’s role is not to investigate or verify the situation, but rather to make the report and set in motion the process of getting help for the child.**

Your support to the child is important. In order to do this, note the following recommendations:

* Reassure the child that it is okay to tell what happened.
* Tell the child what to expect. If you don’t know, say so, but let the child know s/he can be supported by you.
* Project a calm, under-standing and supportive attitude to the child.
* Avoid having the child repeat his explanation to different staff.
* Let the child know that you must tell authorities to get help. Explain that you will have to tell another person because they are at risk. Use a script such as “if you tell me something that makes me feel that you are unsafe or at risk in any way, then I will need to tell someone else”.
* Reassure the student that it is not her/his fault.
* Trust your “gut” feelings.
* Understand the importance of early reporting.
* Make clear, detailed notes of the conversation.
* Remember that an educator who reports in good faith is protected from civil liability.
* Respect the child’s privacy by not discussing the situation out of school.
* Remember that reporting is a request for an investigation into a suspected case of abuse.
* After reporting, it is important to maintain a supportive presence for the child.

**Records:**

Be specific about the context in which the child disclosed:

Name

Age

Name of teacher

Location

Time etc.

Record notes using the child’s own words – try not to add your own interpretation and judgements (or make separate notes about these).

Describe any injuries you see. Send the child to the school nurse who should take photos of the injuries, bruises, cuts and or bleeding, and write a report.

Sign all notes with the date and time as well as name of the signator.

Make sure that notes are given to the person in charge of Child Protection and that they are stored under lock and key (NOT in the child’s regular school files).

**Physical Environment:**

Environment of school:

* Glass in doors.
* Teachers not being on their own with children in a place where both parties can’t be seen.
* Security system for visitors.

Boarding:

Policy and procedures need to be developed.

Ref: UK Boarding Schools’ Association April 2006

Child Protection: Guidance towards developing a school policy.

Policy for Tutoring:

Checked members of school staff.

Takes place at school.

Policy for Supply Staff:

Same procedure as for Recruitment for employed members of staff.**Reporting:**

**How do I report abuse?**

A report of child abuse must be made after there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse. **All reports or other actions must be kept confidential.**

Reports can be made through:

* The school administrator
* School Counselor or Nurse

Each incidence of possible abuse should constitute a separate referral.

When making a report, you should include as much of the following information as is available.

* Child’s name, address, birth date, and gender
* Parent’s name, address, home phone (if possible) and work places
* Nature and extent of the suspected abuse
* Information on previous injuries or background data
* Identity of alleged abuser (if known)

There will be a police interview. Regardless of the country you are in, child abuse is a crime and the police will interview the child. This is can quite threatening to a child.

**What if the suspected abuser is another teacher in my school?**

The Department of Education holds educators more responsible for the care of our children than most other citizens. Teachers are the moral leaders of our children.

When a child discloses about inappropriate behaviors of school personnel, the school must respond no differently than if the alleged offender is a father. Teachers have daily access to children and the emotional and physical safety of a child is determined by the access of the offender to the child, thus disclosure of teacher offenses must be handled immediately and with seriousness.

The integrity of a school and a system is NOT dependent on whether no not an offender exists; instead the integrity of the school or system IS dependent on whether and how that school responds when an alleged offender within the school is reported. It is the duty of the principal to prevent and deter sexual harassment, as well as provide procedures for the resolution or prosecution of sexual harassment between teacher and pupil.

***THE SCHOOL MUST BE A SAFE PLACE FOR ALL STUDENTS.***

SUGGESTIONS for handling disclosures of teacher offenders:

1. Report suspected abuse to Head of School.
2. Report suspected abuse to police for investigation;
3. Place the teacher on forced leave for three-days;
4. Inform the child’s parents immediately;

5. Offer counsellling support to child and family**Follow up**

**Guideline checklist for disclosure follow-up**

# Determine risk for re-offense

What / Who / When / Where

###### If the offense is ongoing and the child lives with the offender

Will you report to authorities?

Who will you bring in to protect the child, such as a non-offending parent?

What immediate actions can the child take apart from reporting?

Listen to as much as the child wants to tell you without pushing the child for details. Try to keep limits – giving the child other alternatives to talk if more time is needed, such as counseling or others in her/his support system.

Explore the feelings and concerns the child has about the experience

* Guilt?
* Fear?
* Shame?
* Anger?

Affirm that the experience was “assault” and thus s/he is never to blame for someone else’s action. Affirm each of the feelings, while also determining if those feelings are overwhelming to the child, then working on helping the child put those feelings within a healthy limit.

Explore the support system so the child can have someone to talk with

* Parents or other adult relative?
* Friend?
* Trusted adult such as a teacher, friend’s parent, minister?

Explore the play the child enjoys and help her/him continue to do these things

* Movies with friends
* “Malling” with friends
* Parties that are safe
* Arts, writing

End the session by making sure the child knows what to do if attempted or assault happens again.

* Say NO, or run away to somewhere safe – ask the child to specify to whom
* Tell someone – ask the child to specify to whom

**Risk factors within the Expatriate Community:**

Power differential between parents (contract for father only)

Physical isolation in family.

No personal safety in schools.

Social isolation of frequent moves.

Poor implementation of protection laws.

Denial.

Social isolation due to lack of language.

Poor implementation of laws against foreigners offending foreigners.

Poor implementation of policies (if any) in schools.

Ref: Victimization Experiences of Expatriate Students in International Schools: Using the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire with international School Students. ISPCAN 2002

**Recruitment:**

* Up to date Police records from country of origin and previous country of employment. Make every attempt to obtain up to date police records.
* RING previous 2 schools if within five years – Ask why the teacher is leaving and if there were any concerns about them of a safety nature with children.
* Work with Recruitment agencies to ensure your policies are followed.